

John F. Kennedy's Legacy

Twenty-five years ago, the curtain came down on Camelot. It's futile to wonder: What if? We should, instead, remember John Kennedy for what he was, not what he could have been, for what he meant to a generation of young Americans whose political and social values he helped nourish.

Kennedy spoke of a "new generation of Americans born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace," a generation sensitive to the realities of world politics, aware of the massive destruction possible by a simple error in judgment. During the Cuban missile crisis, he chose not to seek a military solution; he was not willing to risk American lives in a show of force.

He told us that "to whom much is given, much is required." And give we did. The Peace Corps is a fitting and lasting tribute to what he saw as our role in the world.

He compelled us to reach for the stars. Although he wasn't here for that glorious moment, he let us know mankind could indeed walk on the moon.

Kennedy believed "the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threat-



Kennedy

ened." He was so appalled by the sight of vicious dogs and fire hoses being turned loose on southern blacks that he made civil rights and human rights a moral issue. The civil rights act of 1965 was a legacy of that commitment.

Our generation, he told us, is fated "to live with a struggle we did not start, in a world we did not make." He sent advisers to Vietnam. Would he have pulled them out, as many historians suggest, in his second term? He inherited the Bay of Pigs invasion from the Eisenhower administration, and when it was an abysmal failure, he alone took the blame.

He warned, "those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future." When told about the destruction a nuclear war would cause, he dedicated his presidency to a thawing of the Cold War and a test ban treaty.

In the 25 years since that nightmare day in Dallas, the world has changed. Some of John Kennedy's hopes, dreams, aspirations have come to fruition. We're a better people because of his thousand days. As one brother said in his eulogy to a third: "Some men see things as they are and say, why. I dream things that never were and say, why not?" John Kennedy also said why not. As we look to the future, we echo those words, why not?

Michael Lissauer
Plainview

Letters should be kept brief and are subject to condensation. Writers should include a full address and home and office telephone numbers, where available, as well as affiliation indicating special interest in a subject. Anonymous letters are not printed. Write for Letters Editor, Newsday, Long Island, N.Y. 11747.

Real Cost of Nuclear Arms

The recent disclosures of serious safety problems at several different nuclear weapons facilities operated by the Department of Energy bring to light a problem that has been hidden deep in the labyrinth of national security. We are in the process of poisoning ourselves.

Production of nuclear materials has continued since the beginning of the Cold War with little regard to the long-term consequences, which include: The release of enormous quantities of radiation, poisoning workers and surrounding communities; unsafe storage of tons of radiological waste which lasts for thousands of years and cannot be isolated from the environment, and not accounting for large quantities of material that could be used by enemies to fashion nuclear weapons.

These nonmonetary costs are in addition to the hundreds of billions in taxes that have flowed into nuclear weapons production.

Why, then, are government officials urging huge additional expenditures — upwards of \$100 billion — for new weapons facilities? Clearly the answer cannot be deterrence. If 30,000 existing warheads will not deter the Soviets, why should more weapons or modernized weapons do so?

The question of "why more nuclear weapons production" demands immediate examination. Our government's current response appears to be a mixture of bureaucratic inertia and a philosophy of "more is better" or "peace through strength."

But can we afford more nuclear weapons — not the \$100 billion cost in money — but the poisoning of workers, communities and future generations? Quite literally, atomic weapons are already destroying us, even if they are never detonated.

Martin Melkonian
Hempstead

Editor's Note: The writer teaches economics at Hofstra University.

Psychiatrists' Opinions Are Not for Sale

Cyrus R. Vance Jr., a former Manhattan prosecutor, wrote an article earlier this year in which he criticized two psychiatrists for conduct arising out of their expert testimony in a sensational criminal trial involving a double homicide ("Medical Expert Witnesses Are Not Hired Guns," Viewpoints, June 8).

I am one of the two psychiatrists Vance attacked in his article and, in the interest of basic fairness, I think a response is called for in order to set the record straight.

I am an associate professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons, where I am in charge of a program in law, psychiatry and ethics. I have authored more than 50 articles in the area of psychiatry and the law, psychiatric ethics, psychiatric expertise and, notably, the authoritative article in the literature on the very psychiatric defense employed at the trial in question: "extreme emotional disturbance."

I am consulted from time to time as a psychiatric expert in criminal and civil cases (and have testified at murder trials in the past on behalf of Vance's former office, that of the Manhattan district attorney). I always approach such consultations in a professionally objective and scientific manner and not as an advocate or "hired gun" for the side that retains me.

My professional reputation and integrity are highly regarded by leaders in both professions, psychiatry and law, and my opinions are well respected and not for sale, as Vance suggests. In fact, Vance knows quite well (and the trial transcript of the case will bear this out) that I performed an exhaustive in-depth evaluation, including not only psychiatric examinations but also extensive review of hospital records, reports and other documents

concerning the defendant; he knows I even attended the psychiatric examination conducted by the psychiatrist retained by the DA's office. Contrary to Vance's characterization, I was fully informed in regard to the defendant's past history, such as it was, prior to my testimony.

Yet Vance tried to convey the damaging false impression that I carried out a slipshod evaluation, improperly avoided learning anything about the defendant that would detract from his case, buried my head in the sand and accepted at face value whatever the accused chose to tell me about himself and his conduct leading up to the homicides. By thus twisting the facts himself, Vance disingenuously implied I had been negligent at best or unscrupulous at worst.

Vance's associates wasted no time in circulating copies of his article to my colleagues and professional groups. The effect was not merely to discredit me but to undermine our traditional system of justice. Under our adversary system, juries are entitled to hear from qualified expert witnesses on both sides when there is an honest difference of opinion in order to reach a more informed and just verdict in a case.

While paying lip service to a defendant's right to a legitimate psychiatric defense, Vance raises the specter of irresponsible public officials wielding the awesome power of the government, attempting to intimidate and injure those expert witnesses who dare to disagree with the state's position in a case by going after them in the media and casting aspersions on their competence and character. Is such an abuse of power and trust Vance's idea of an acceptable ethical standard for prosecutors to follow?

Robert Lloyd Goldstein, MD, JD
Manhattan

The Yankees Are No More

The Yankees? There are no "Yankees." They died many years ago — or rather, they were murdered many years ago when a man named George Steinbrenner took over ownership of the team. The only thing left to remind us of what has passed on is Yankee Stadium, and even that has lost its charm. Surely, it has been beautified, but the beauty is geared to the ostentatious, uncaring subscribers who buy blocks of tickets to show off, but who rarely attend the games — usually giving the tickets out to their own customers.

Back when the Yankees existed, it was fun attending games, sitting in the bleachers, getting to know the players in the bullpen and coming back year after year to old friends who were there until they were too old to play — and the Yankees kept winning.

Now it's a business. I buy you today — if I don't like you or you don't treat me right, I trade you tomorrow. Batting averages, runs batted in, stolen bases mean nothing. The fans mean less — we just pay to come to the games, root for our favorite players and then watch as they are threatened or, more likely, traded.

It's no fun anymore — we don't even get to know the players. The numbers change from day to day — the names change from game to game, and we go on losing in the end.

With hope that Steinbrenner gets tired of losing and decides to trade the team for a race-track, I will keep on believing that maybe there is some hope for the Yankees in the future.

Janet Cohen
Calverton

Newsday

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